TAPE NO. 2

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NARRATOR Ben Lopez

INTERVIEWER Phyllis Lotz

PLACE Historical Museum
SYV

DATE April 1, 1979

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Interview with Ben Lopez, Interview 1
Date: 1, April 1979; Santa Ynez, California
Interviewer: Phyllis Lotz
Transcriber: Phyllis Lotz
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PL: I would like your history?

Lopez: I went down to De La Cuesta's in 1909, worked there two years for Cuesta, when I got out of there I was 16 years old. Then I worked for Mr. George Row, Bess's Father, on the San Marcos.

PL: What sort of work did you do?

Lopez: Cowboy. My brother Pete was foreman of the riders, after he died I took over. He knew the roundups. I worked a long time for him. We used to take cattle to Oxnard.

PL: Did you herd them all the way to Oxnard?

Lopez: Oh, yes, we rode them all over the mountians, had coffee at Pat Kinivans and we went on to Santa Barbara and put them in corals and next morning we drove them to the beach and then to Ventura. If the tide was high we had to wait until the tide went down and then on to Oxnard. Then coming back we stopped at Santa Barbara spent the night and then back to Santa Ynez, where we started rounding up cattle again.

PL: How many days would the trip be?

Lopez: Two days, three days by the time we got back home.

PL: How many cattle?

Lopez: 500 to 1,000, with 35 to 40 riders.

PL: Any trouble in keeping them together?

Lopez: Good riders and fearless. We watched the old riders.

PL: Where did you go to school?

Lopez: I went to school in the mountains. Rufugio Mountains. When I worked at the De La Cuesta's, the girls used teach me at night. Miss Ynez and Miss Michaela, I used to bring her to school in Solvang, when she taught there before there was a Solvang. Dulcie, I brought to high school and Michaela I took anywhere she wanted to go, a buggy and on horse back. Duties, I milked the cows, cleaned the barns and cleaned the horses.

PL: Was your Father and Mother living here?(in SantaYnez)

Lopez: They weren't born her, but lived here. They were born in Montecito.

PL: What were their names?

Lopez: Victorio Lopez, and Alvera Robles Lopez. They had a bunch of kids, we were all born in Solvang, on Selbey's Ranch, where they nade the olive oil. When they closed up, we went up to the mountains. Then in 1917, when my brother died, we sold the place and we moved down here Father had a house here, and we scattered around.

PL: Do you have brothers and sisters?

Lopez: Yes, two brothers and one sister. I couldn't move back her (SY Valley) because my wife did not like it here. After I came home from service I did not go to the ranch. George (Rowe) wanted me back but I worked other places. Mr. Fuller (Alisal Ranch) the owner wanted to get me out of the service but I wanted to go. My brother was in Germany and I wanted to go. Mr. Fuller owned cattle on many ranches.

PL: You served in World War I?

Lopez: Yes.

PL: What year did you go into service?

Lopez: 1918

PL: Did you go overseas?

Lopez: No. I wanted to go, could not make it. When I got to San Francisco, to Angel Island, they had a place at the beach called Pneumonia Piont. I go there and get a cold and they took me to McDowell Hospital. I spent three weeks there and my company was gone. I was given guard duty at the hospital. My other brother was in San Diego three months when the war was over.

PL: After the war, did you come back to the (SY) Valley?

Lopez: Yes, Mr. Rowe wanted me to go to work, I said no, I wanted another job. Mr. Rowe was superintendant of three or four ranches. San Marcos, Jalama, Jesue Maria, two in San Luis Obispo. I even had cattle in pens in Betteravia.

PL: When did you get married?

Lopez: 1920. Its a funny thing, I did not want to get married, I wanted to run around with girls, my brother got married in Carpenteria, I went down to the wedding, and sure enough, I found the girl.

PL: What was her name?

Lopez: Isabell Shumaker. We were married in 1923. I went to work for the pipeline for 27 years. My wife wanted to live in Santa Barbara, so I commuted.

PL: What pipeline did you work for?

Lopez: Water and sewer.

At tnis point, Miss Jeannette Lyons came into the interview

Lopez: Miss Donahue taught me at the school at Refugio. A small school 15 or 20 kids. After that they closed the school as everyone moved out.

Lyons: Do you remember Cordero?

Lopez: I knew the boys. Conao Cordero, his brother Johnnie and Juanito. They lived at Najoqui and finally sold the ranch.

Lyons: Did a girl named Ruby Evertsteach at the Refugio School?

Lopez: No. When I came to town, I could not get in the bars, I was too young. And besides there were the thrashing machines in July and on, to cut the grain. They brought the big machines to cut the grain, boilers that ran with wood and coal and then diesel, brought from the trains in San Luis, and haul water from down below. 2 or 3 wagons. Friday night, some one would throw a rock on the conveyer,and break it and come to town. Thats the only way they could get to town. It was too late by the time they fixed the conveyer

Lyons: Mr. Boyd and Selbey had an olive mill and Adrufo(Ben's brother) drove the horse, Whitey.

Lopez: My Mother and Father worked there. Cousins and others are in the picture at the museum. My Father made the olive oil. I was younger that Adrufo, he and two or three others were born in Montecito but I was born

here(Duff Ranch).

Lyons: Do you know how old the adobe(on Duff Ranch) is?

Lopez: No, I don't. We lived there, and it was there long before that .

Lyons: Then it is at least 82 years old.

Lopez: It is probably close to 100 years.

PL: How many children in the family?

Lopez: Mother had about 18. She had three sets of twins. She lost all the twins. She saved nine. My Mother was a hard working woman. They were good people, my Father never spanked me. We respected each other. My Mother did spank us.

Lyons: Did you know my Father, Judge Lyons?

Lopez: I think I met him, I knew your brother, Sam. When my died, Sam was one of the lawyers for us, and Jensen. Sam was the first one my Father hired. My brother got shot. We were working at San Marcos Ranch, my brother Pete and I. He came to Santa Ynez, the deputy sheriff was here, they first got started because they had some cattle from the ranch. My brother went to get the cattle and the sheriff would not give the cattle to him. He told Pete,"I don't like you and I have three people, I am going to kill before I leave this place." My brother replyed, you're not going to kill anyone. My brother got the cattle, they opened the corral and took the cattle back to the ranch. He had a girl working with him. He went to pick up the girl, when her brother and cousin were going to beat up my brother. Pete was good with his hands, so hit them both. They went home and Pete took the girl home. That started the whole thing. At Gaviota we were shipping cattle, we were supposed to ship the cattle but we came back to Santa Ynez. Pete wanted some clothes from the house, so two friends walked with him down the street, a six foot man, and a small man withPete in the middle. The girl's brother and cousin had told Frank Knight(deputy sheriff) that Pete was in town, so Kni Knight and another duputy walked up behind my brother, hit him on the head with a gun, Pete fell to his knees

and Frank Knight shot him in the head. The bullet went on and hit the big man in the belt buckle, it didn't hurt him. The they put handcuffs on the other guy and left him and ran away.

PL: What a strange story!

Lyons: I remember hearing about that. He died right here on the street(Sagunto)

Lopez: Back of this place, right here. There used to be a Drug Store here(Cunnan's) That night one of my friends went over to the ranch, that morning the boss said, "We are going to ship the cattle, you better go with the cattle," and I said, "No, I'm not going." Why?, I didn't want to go, and my brother bawled me out. "Why don't you go, you always go." But not this time. They shipped the cattle without me. That night about 11 o'clock, my firnd hallowered to us and said "your brother has been shot." Very much hurt. We went up to the hills and got the very best horses that we had and started for town. And I told the kids. The cops were in the pool hall, I said we are going to burn them, he is my brother. We met them at Gaviota, the Sheriff came after them. Took them to the cooler. He was already dead. I cooled down the, and anyway, he died in 1917. The family scattered, Adrulfo died first. He got pretty old and thats the way things ended. We all were cowboys in our time.

PL: Do you think that going into World War I changed your life?

Lopez: It did change my life, but I still was the same. I obeyed my orders on the ranch as I did in the service. It was rough, but I did it. I had a pretty fair time. I did not get overseas that I wanted pretty bad, Buster Miller(Anthony Wayne Miller) and I went from here, he was in the same company and was overseas in six months. I stayed behind because of the pneumonia. I worked four hours on guard duty and then went to San Francisco.

PL: Had you been to San Francisco before?

Lopez: No. I was afraid of water, and when they discharged me.

it took along time to get discharged. I lost a tooth as a kid, and the doctors kept saying , you are missing one tooth, I told them I didn't have it, and they kept me a week. One big Major, came in to look at my mouth, "This is not the first time I've seen a man with a tooth missing, did you play with a string in your mouth, as a child?" And then they discharged me.

PL: You said you were afraid of water?

Lopez: Yes, I never liked water. We were in a small boat, about fifty of us, I stayed in the middle.

PL: Did Miss Lyons ever meet your wife?

Lopez: No.

Lyons: No, I never did.

Lopez: Maybe she did a long time ago. I had three girls and one boy.

PL: What are your children's names?

Lopez: Art is the boy. Gladys, Lucille, who died, and Josephine who cares for me. My place got burned a few years ago, so Josephine could decorate the house the way she wanted to. My grand daughter's husband built the house. He said,"Tata, what shall we do here?" and I would say, "Don't ask me, ask Josephine."

PL: Are you pleased with what Josephine did?

Lopez: Yes, I am. On the same place. El Sueno Road. 365 Sherwood Drive, but my wife never liked it, never could do anything with it, when she died, we moved up there.

PL: When did your wife die?

Lopez: 1965.

PL: When you worked for the pipeline, for 27 years, was it for the city?

Lopez: No, it was a company that was called to many places, it was from Ventura. The Union called me to say they were going to put some pipe in the valley, and the head of Union called me and said there was a job when can you start, you have a job with us. You are a fine man. I met them Monday, and worked two months. He said when we come back we willcall you so in the mean time I worked for other companies, and in the oil fields. He asked for me later,"Tell Ben to stop at the yard," and sure enough I went. "When are you ready to go to work?"

"I got you a job," "I have to give my boss a weeks notice." So I went to work for them. They gave me a map and I hunted for the places on the map. In a weeks time I knew most everything.

PL: What location was this?

Lpoez: The Tidewater of Ventura, now its Phillips. I worked there 6 months, a year and they didn't want anyone but me, up there because I knew the country. So everytime we put in the sewer line in Solvang.. The company did, I was not the foreman.

PL: You did alot of commuting from your job to Santa Barbara?

Lopez: I used to go clean to this side of Los Angeles, right over by Eagle Rock. 'Be there at 8 am and quit work to go back to Santa Barbara. Then I get home and take care of the chickens, take care of the garden, rabbits, my wife wanted all that stuff and to keep her happy I had too.

PL: Were Arthur and the girls a big help to you?

Lopez: Yes! They wouldn't go to Ventura, because they were going to one of the best schools in Santa Barbara Hope School. My wife said, I'm working for rich people here, and they love me. Alright, let the old man go to Ventura and back!

PL: After you retired what did you do?

Lopez: After my wife died, I'll say i'm not a drinker, I take a drink once in awhile, not when I was young, after she died, I said to myself,"well, what are you going to do old man, you love your kids and your wife, now she is gone, the kids were hers, your not going to throw your life away and get married again, and bring another woman in to the homse, stay with the kids, be with them." They say why don't you get married, but I say no. My wife had a rest home when she died, six six little old women, she was sick seven months, different doctors, she said,"Don't close the rest home," I was working in the office in Santa Barbara, and making

breakfast for the old ladies, put on a tray, and then go to work. My daughter(Josephine) would be here. Thats the way I took care of the. I year a half later, I asked my duaghter,"why are we doing this, Why! you don't like this, lets get rid of it! Lets sell everyting to the poor people" and we moved to our(present) home.

PL: Tell me a little about your Father?

Lopez: My Grandfather came from Spain, he was a Basque from Barcelona, and he came up to Monterey, then had three boys. They came down here, one was married. Grandfather was racing horses for the king. Mothers side, Grandmother came from Monterey, a young girl moved to Montecito, this boy friend of hers brought her a little piece of grapevine and she planted it there. It was the biggest one in the world. The one they took to the Worlds Fair. Do you remember Murrietta the Outlaw? He was a friend of the family and stopped and picked up a little branch of the grapevine and took it and planted it.

Lyons: A person who would know is Jim Blakley.

Lopez: The place is called Para Grande Lane, where my Grandmother lived. I think they have some pictures of it (the grapevine) in the family.

PL: Do you nave any favorite memories of your Dad?

Lopez: My Father was very good, a sheepshurrer, he never worked for anyone, Wood chopper too and hauled it to the depot, to Oregon and Montana to sheer sheep.

PL: The oil he was making for Mr. Boyd and Mr. Selby, where did the olives come from?

Lopez: They sold it in San Francisco, the olives grew below the mission(Mission Santa Ines). The land near the river was full of olive trees.

Lyons: Both Mr. A.M. Boyd and Mr. A.S. Boyd had olive orchards on the ranches.

Lopez: They used to pick up the olives and take them to the Mill, and grind them up. He was a great old man, my Father was. You know while I was growing up I helped him here and there, I used to watch him the way he hand-

led the people. Then I said when I grow up I want to be like my father. I had to come down and be nice to them. I tell my kids to be good to people. You know how I used to fire my men? Anybody who came in drunk, I go to the office, get his cheque, hand it to him and say I have to lay you off, but when I have more work, I'll call you, they would say fine. It did not hurt the man, no hard feelings that was the way. Everyone likes me to this day.

PL: Do you have grandchildren?

Lopez: I have eight.

Lyons: Are you related to another Ben Lopez?

Lopez: There was another Ben Lopez, who worked in a bank and his brother was William. They moved to San Francisco. They are pretty old and may not be living. There are other Lopez and everytine they make a bill, they come to me.

PL: It has been so nice that you would talk with us today, Mr. Lopez.

Lyons: It has been great and brought up lots of memories for me.

Arthur; Dad was talking to me about the Indian Reservation, and it used to be the Sanja Cota Reservation, he knows where the bountries lines are. It has been there a long time. The Cotas used to live there where there was a ditch.

Lopez: When I worked at the Alisal, Joe Murphy was my friend, George Rowe was my boss. Joe Murphy came to me and said, "Ben, I want you to come down and run the thrasher for me, I havn't go anyone to run it for me, and I said, "If George Rowe lets me come I will help you." So the boss said you, go ahead and I ran the harvester with 32 horses and the place was so small, getting in between a tree or a fence or tetween the creek and fence I ran the harvester for him, and this was his nephew Joe Murphy, the owner was from Los Angeles. Joe came from New York to run the ranch for Mr. Murphy and that wa how we got to be good friends. I know when I was here, and finished up work and I went back to the ranch

Mr. Murphy's wife was very friendly, I used to head the the club and make up dances, they wanted me to hire musicians, I used to do that. She made cakes and pies to raffle. If the dance wasn't here, it was in Solvang, Clara Nielsen, Azel Nielsen, all of them Petersens, we were all the same age. Then I quit.